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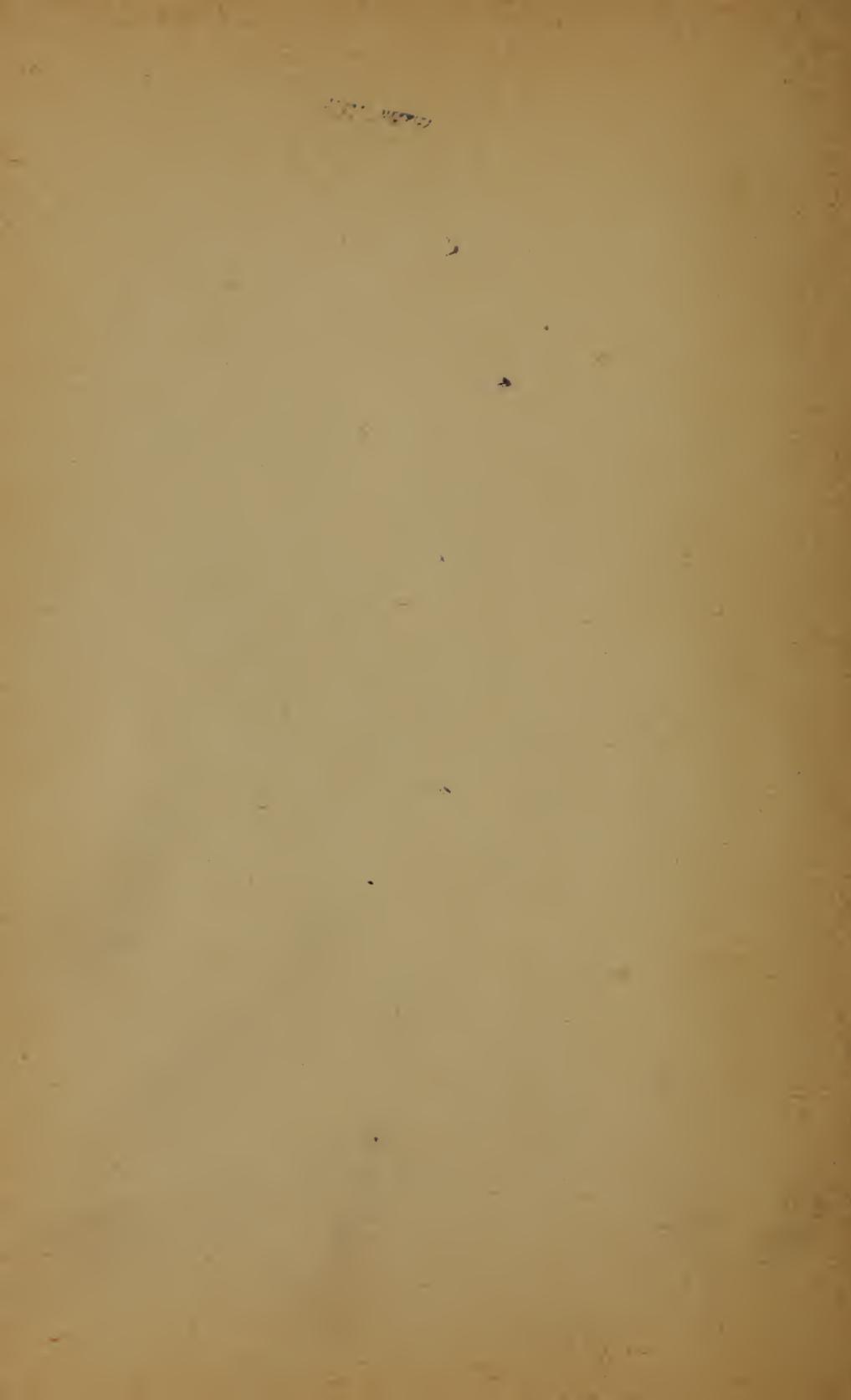
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A Song of Companies

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

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A SONG OF COMPANIES
AND
OTHER POEMS.

A SONG OF COMPANIES.

PRELUDE.

1.

Heroes and all ye men of mark!
Ye are as shadows on mine eyes!
Your names sink in the distant dark,
I see and sing but Companies!

Enough of homage have ye had:
Too many garlands do ye wear;
To have your splendid brows thus clad,
The vine of common life is bare.

Ye have mistaken your own bays,
And hold them as a ceaseless right;
Ye heard not in the voice of praise,
The sound that spoke another's might.

But know! that if old Caesar's name
A thousand still with honor speak;
In that accordant, strong acclaim,
A *thousand Caesars* utterance seek.

Let song no more be bound by fame;
But take henceforth a wider plan

Than theme which tells the many's shame—
Than measure of a single man.

But let her measure, if she may,
The dim outlines of prodigies,
And trace the new expanse of day
When brotherhood's the morning breeze.

And let her search the dazzling gap
Which opens in the actual,
When to the low roofs of mishap,
The choirings hearts' reveilles call.

Yea! let her dare the black abyss
Which swift expands in spheres of worth,
When human hands do join amiss,
And wrong is done upon the earth.

And let each good or evil shape
Of social inflorescence vast,
Be her new theme; let naught escape,
But all before the mind be past:—

The wild strange flowers which face the skies,
And bless with bliss the wondering sun,
Where human faces circle-wise,
Their petalled glories bind in one;

And vines and wreaths and every form
Of sweetly-twined humanity,

And stars whose purgèd lights disarm
The wingèd ills of destiny.

And all these marvels let her scan,
Singing and seeing as she goes;
But let her use some talisman
Whene'er her strain no longer flows.

For she will meet along the way,
Some terrible and darkling blooms,
Whose poisoned breath doth smite the day,
And sickens all her sweet perfumes.

2.

Man is not less, that he hath found
That his own strength will fastest grow,
If planted in the magic ground
Of mingled lives, whereon no snow

Doth ever fall through countless days
Which see the wondrous products rise,
Unless it be in soft amaze,
To make white stations towards the skies.

Nay! man is more, that he doth see
That when a brother he disowns,
He covers his own majesty,
And weighs it down with heavy stones.

When freely for another's use,
He gives himself, joy flies along:—
A heavenly bird ye cannot loose
And hold in leash its rapturous song.

The soul alone doth face the soul,
Naught else can ever block its way;
If Man stands not before the goal,
Demons its power cannot stay.

All that doth burden human kind
Is what each man alone must bear;
But when all spirits are combined,
The weight will be as light as air.

Should all the winds that wrestling strive,
Unlock their arms and join in flight;
Or all the streams which mountains rive,
Blend in one changeless tide of might;

What matchless birds would hither glide!
What wonders hide the shrunken skies!
And, floating on those currents wide,
Would come what august argosies!

And if the pulsing deeps of Man
Should move with one unchanging will,
They'd bear us where no power could span
The distance to the nearest ill.

THE COMPANY OF CHILDREN.

Wondrous the stream of life! Its open deeps
Flow over golden floors; no sediment
Of clouding or corrupting substances
Settles within it; and continually
The under-currents clear of childhood glow,
Splendrous as that unrisen light which rules
The visioned world of sleeping Innocence.

O Child, day's image of the shrouded fay
That leads the poet's vision through the night;
Dear, faultless symbol of the true, first thought;
Expositor of worlds where there exists
Neither the pain of slow premeditation,
Nor the regretful after-thought; supreme
And blinding beauty kerneling the dark
Coverings of surprise; behold! alone,
I would consider thee a little time,
Before I dare to turn my strengthened sight
Unto the splendors, linked and manifold,
Of Childhood's freely-flowing company.

Small as thou art, thou'rt not a dwarf adult;
Though *he* may sometime be a monstrous child;
Thy little form doth not confine the heart,

Nor hath thy face been caught in Care's close net,
Which loseth all the floods of loveliness,
To hold one changeless and forbidding look
For after life; but still the agile lip
Doth trip the frequent smiles and hold them
there.

Throughout the long day art thou busier
Than sunlight on the ever-rippling streams,
And farther than the Morning ever cast
Westward her silver staff, to mark the place
Of sunset, doth thy waking gladness fly;
While nightly is thy sleep so fine and ambient,
That midnight only seems a sunny peak
Piercing the deeps of thy serene repose.

O little, laughing Titan of the earth!
Free and undaunted by the false, the cramp;
Untouched by tumult of opposing tongues;—
Thy face hath powers of pictured utterance
Which dare the heavens towards which thou
turnest it,
For any joy too swift for it to seize,
Too subtle to enroll in that long train,—
That sweet processional which crosses it.
Thy face is like a living voice that speaks
All languages; doth turn interpreter
Of every sign of the unspeakable;
Gives sweeter oracles than ever sprung

From Delphic lips; or, in a moment's space,
Becomes depository of divine
And baffling subtleties which challenge us;—
Still in the shining highway of the true
Which winds around this life, we know not first,
Whether, O tiny traveler, thou wilt leave
The certain track, and dare with us the dear
But wildering, intercrossing ways of earth,
Or pass, with dustless feet, beyond our sight.

A magic mirror is companionship!
Each single beauty grows a multitude,
And all the space that union consecrates
Is peopled with seraphic likenesses;
O children, grouping all so variously
Yet forming ever one majestic curve,
A meteor-belt of beauty round the earth
Ye seem to me—earth's sacred aureole—
Whose fulgent zone doth break the baleful force
Of those cross-currents of envenomed thought,
Burning their courses through the airy deeps
Of life; and doth prevent the stabl'ishing
Of the full circuit, which were ruinous.
Or, sometimes, to the eyes dry with the dust
Of the attrition of conflicting sights,
Ye are world-fountains, perfect, glorified,
Whose irised waters growing in the sun,
Fall back continually into the pool,
With all their shining increase intermixed.

Of companies ye are the holiest!
The temple of your mirthful ministry
Hath open doors upon its every side;
And, centrally, the simple altar stands,
A circling bar of gold, whereon doth lean
Each member of your bright fraternity;
And all the sunny blessing of your joys,
Focussed in glory in the midst, doth flash
Such splendor to the amply-arching dome,
As rings of suns would give the empyrean.
Your clasping hands but sweetly symbolize
The meeting of two worlds beneath your feet,
Which, playing on the rim of that embrace,
Throb with the fervor of its fine exchanges.

What changing beauty has this company!
As meeting waves moon-mantled with strange
lights,
Seem its assemblies forming instantly—
Their sessions but a brighter radiance—
And then dissolving from the finished work,
Leaving but echo as its guardian.
And all the moving multitude do flush
And pulsate with a life transfused with light,
As those deep sky-streams, hid by day and night,
When they with free, exultant turbulence,
Flow through the open rapids of the dawn,
Or down the sunset's crimson cataract.

But as surrounding tumults fray such visions,
So from the outer limits of this band,
Although its radiant ranks no smaller grow,
Fall hopeless forms, white-faced and phantom-like,
Which eager winds bear swiftly far away.
Ah! who can now bring back those images,
Those ghastly pictures of destroyèd joy?
Or shall not fear, remembering what he was,
That, lingering in some place of perfect truth,
They sit in awful judgment on his life?
What bitter stroke of Fate! that those who leave
That charmèd band, have power to forget;
That they shall ne'er return; or only when,
Some mystic poison in the air of age
Hath slain the last sweet memory;
And then disguised with masks of mastery,
False wisdom, dead propriety, and moved
By arrogance of stature, they come back,
To work oppression, where they once were free.

THE COMPANY OF FRIENDS.

Far down within the lower floods of life
Stands shimmering the spacious Hall of Friends:
Well built is it of crystal drenched with foam
Of sun-falls, and the light which finds it seems
As though, through depths of water falling, it
Had with the breath of slumbering mermaids mixed,
Or lingered over lilies till it paled.
Within the sacred edifice are placed
Fountains that rise from the deep vital stream
Which under-flows all subtly-gushing springs
Of visible beauties; ivies slowly coiled
Round the long rim of cycles; circles wide
Of easy, loosely-linked seats that dwarf
The longest flights Olympian eagles made,
Aforetime, round the head of Jove, and sweet
As smiles on Music's face; and everywhere
O'er the bright level of the inner space,
Are other seats, in groups as various
As the full heavens' star-clusters are, and meet
For every form of happy fellowship;
While fitly interspersed are couches soft,
That droop with weight of doubled rest, and chime
The subtile music of conversing dreams.

Here are preserved memorials of all
Earth's ancient friendships, and the quickened air
Murmurs sweet echoings of gentle deeds;
Here are the magic levels which adjust
All stream-abounding hearts unto the fair
And equal interflow of all their currents;
While here are likewise stored the sacred clues
To every past delight, with records clear
Of each true step that turned towards happiness.

And Nature honors with especial trust
The Hall of Friends; for in this place she keeps
The records of her noblest enterprises;
Preserves earth's purest, simplest elements,
And all foundations of enduring things;
Herein doth build those floors of broadest deeds,
Pillared on ages of supreme resolve,
And domed with her free-raised divinity;
And all those living, blooming potencies
Which would not rest on the sharp edge of passion,
Nor grow in the cold coffers of the house
Of Peace, here leaves she in security;
And when she takes her flight into the deep,
Obscure abysses of the still Unclaimed,
Unto some glittering column of the true,
Or silver shrine of steadfastness within
This flawless edifice, doth she affix
The golden thread which e'er assures her safe
Deliverance and unwandering return.

Unto that roomy meeting-place of Friends,
I see a vast procession slowly move;
From every place of human accidents,
Turns some one towards the festal avenue
Which leadeth there, admonished by some late
Discovery of rare mysterious thing,
Which would not fit itself to ownership,
But bore upon its many-faced delight,
Strange symbols of an open universe.
Leaving the fierce pursuit of wild-winged fame,
Or the slow chase of gentle competence;
Dropping the hot blade of individual strife
Still quivering with the mad, magnetic kiss
Of answering blade; abandoning the bare
Watch-towers of their selfish properties,
Or the sweet cells of solitude, they join
The marching columns of true brotherhood,
And ever pour into the unfilled place.

And from that glorious company are sent
Messengers along the winding ways of life,
Questioning Rumor, searching Laughter's lips,
To learn, if anywhere, a man had found,
Either in daytime of discovery,
Or in the night of sunniest surprise,
Some hidden treasure which that playful pair,
Gladness and Mirth, had buried in the ground
Of his humanity; or on the track

Of those shy sisters pressing for some scrap
Of pencilled plan which, haply, they might drop,
Showing the outlines of their next device.
And when one of these sacred couriers
Comes back, successful, to that Hall of Friends,
And cries unto that cheerful company :
“Another joy is found! new laughter learned!”
Exultant shouts, that blend in mighty waves,
Do float those blessed words towards Heaven.

Many of those assembled in the Hall
Are still to signs and symbols bound, and need
Some earth-wrought model of experience
To bring heart-image of his friend to him ;
Others may give unto their comrades near
Some secret pearl of inner purity,
Dissolven in the crystal draft of confidence ;
And some, their converse coming to an end,
Still strew the silvery down of melody
Along the pathway of the meeting hearts ;
But one small group there is which sits afar,
Close to the eastern limits of the room,
Receiving all the gladness of the throng,
Yet catching on their serious faces, faint,
Fine rays of orient light, which, now and then,
Do break in tender trials through the walls
Pulsing with prophecies ; and they are mute ;
For each is pondering, how, first of all,

He may interpret some suggestive sound,
Or in these haunting gleams find some sweet word,
Which, whispered to the others, shall be hint
Of that new world where friends are perfected.

THE COMPANY OF SINGERS.

Earth without song were barrenness and dust!
Its elements, to union still unwon,
Were whirling in the pits of Aimlessness,
And aching dumbly with the unknown want
Of fellowship's fruition of delight.
For all earth's varied and abounding life
Moves only in the shining track of song:
The day that pours her unpolluted floods
Over the crimson coral reef of dawn,
Sets song upon the first light wave that leaves
Its ripple marks high up the sands of noon;
And when those tides slip back into the deeps,
Still there remain light streams of melody
That flow beyond the evening's barrier,
And wear away the bare, black rock of night.

Man without song were but a spectral thing,
Flitting uneasily from shade to shade;
For him unlighted were the house of life,
And doubly dark the roofless vague of death;
Unbuilt were the streets of brotherhood,
Since song is only brotherhood in bloom.
No gift of sudden ecstasy were his,
With long abiding residue of peace;

No summons from the hidden haunts of joy,
Would greet him lurking near the porch of woe;
Forever holden to some dark intent,
No charmèd work of kindly Carelessness
Could loose the bondage of severer powers.
Man without song were kinless everywhere:
A dark intruder in the world of light,
With sunken eyes which beauty could not fill,
Clueless of all its open happiness.

Swift and triumphant soldiery of song!
Whose scattered forces ambushed in the world,
Win it at intervals from Care's trained bands,
But hold it most inconstantly; I see
Your wavering and breaking lines advance,
Retreat, dissolve and brightly reappear;
Each vagrant melodist enlisted there,
Self-summoned, self-dismissed, yet lingering
To fling one fierce and flaming dart against
The rubbish ramparts of discordant arts.
Winds through your banners sing exultantly:
Hills echo sweetly your too-fitful notes:
The waters murmur their continuous praise;
And all the happy voyagers in air
Haste, with the tidings of your victories,
On to song's distant, crystal capitol.

Inspired miscellany of sweet sounds!
And magical commingling of unlike,

Conflicting tongues to unison of voice!
Who hears the roll-call of embattled song,
And wonders not that such diversity
Of darting lights and floating radiances
Could e'er be gathered, for a moment's space,
Into one flaming sword that smites for all?
Hear but the naming of the foremost ranks:
There, loudest, are the Revellers who break
Tumultuously into the house of joy,
And bring its chalice to the common life;
And near them stand the grave-eyed Laborers,
Who, eagle-like, seize on their task with song,
And bear it swiftly to some eyrie goal
Of happiness; and next, the Ministrants,
Who lay the broidered cloth of melody
Upon the holy ground where Worshipers
Do meet the Deity; conspicuous,
The Comforters, whose sweet, adventurous notes,
Crossing the circles of the world's disorder,
Reach the bewildered soul within; or they
Whose rightly-turning voices can unwind
The vortices of sorrow and restore
The heart unto the onward flow of life.

And there are other singers visible;
Such as do rouse them from recurrent trance
To live in glory for a little space:
Friends who in gladness deck their comradeship

With songs that blossom from the ends of speech;
And Lovers, leaders of the sweetest strains,
Who blow the purple mists of song adown
The shafted splendor to the nuptial day.

O Singers! flying columns of the free!
Early you left your splendid rendezvous—
That flashing temple of the Morning God—
To make the march across the fields of day.
How have your first tense notes swept o'er the earth,
Like tuneful waves of gusty energy!—
Shaking the fragrance from too-tardy flowers;
Brushing the heavy dews of drowsiness
Off from night's slenderest growths of purpose;
Blowing some door of mighty enterprise
Open before Ambition's eager feet;
Or closing, as with sudden walls of fire,
The ways where worthiness declines to guilt;
And baffling with divinest art, all banes
Of nature with her own sweet benisons.

But later have your softer, easier strains
Worked a new meaning in the mind of day.
Low was that bugle-call, which bade the heart
Give up its chase of some escaping good,
And find its blessing in the good that is:
Light was the note that loosened Labor's belt,
And slackened all the tightened strands of care.

I heard those healing songs flow far and wide,
Bearing their ministries of tenderness ;
Paying the heart's old debts, and offering
Gratuities of lasting happiness ;
Drawing those whelmed in seas of weariness
Safe to some lofty rock which Music holds,
Gibraltar-like, against the clamorous world ;
And with their forceful sweetness driving off
The shades of Obligation and Remorse,
Which lie across the pathway of mankind.

Hark to the Singers, now the day is past !
Filling night's quiver with the shafts of light ;
Launching each infant sailor on the sea
Of dreams, in barks of unabating joys ;
And, afterward, when age has found near by
Its heavier rest, like watchmen of the soul,
Along the shores of midnight wandering,
And calling lest it sink too far in sleep.

THE COMPANY OF FIGHTERS.

Away all calm and silent ministries!
All potencies that gather in still hands!
All glimpses of sweet phantoms in the long,
Dim avenues of contemplation! all
Sublime unveilings of the lonely soul
With seraphs peering o'er the glowing hills!
Away rare hours of sure intelligence,
When the heart, lighting its immortal fires,
Burns up the dead-wood drifted on its shores,
Sweeps the seas clear, and with creative force,
Launches new fleets in search of newer ports!
Away the dearest use of solitude!—
The quiet tuning of the strings apart,
And preparation of some newer song
And joyfulest surprise of fellowship;
Away the glad return to companies;
The meeting and the full succeeding hours!
For now the wild tribes of tempestuous wastes
Come ravaging the fertile realm of peace!

Turn back, O Modern Age, with all thy train!
Off with the painted mask! lower the flag!
Stop the bold babble of the tutored lips
Fabling of love, large life, and brotherhood!

Dismiss thine angel-clad embassadors,
And guides that wheedle like immodest girls;
And give their places back to savages!
For thou art leagued with all the powers of strife.
These are but brawlers now about thy feet,
And in the rear already gather fast
The rabble bands of Fighters—even now
They seize upon thy baggage-wains, and find
No boasted thing of thy peace-offerings
Unfitted for the latest deed of hate:
Turn back, convicted posturer, in shame!

Behold the restless hosts of Violence!
Their campless legions ever on the march,
Incorporate terrors threatening everything!
Review their wrestling ranks that flash and pale
With breaking splendors like the Northern Lights.
Myriads are there who are but instruments
Of those sharp, naked forces of the world,
Which know no sheath of peaceful tarryings
In Nature's slow and fruitful offices:—
Allies of spasms and explosive fires,
And bounded by the measure of a throb.
These do but hear the summons in the dark:
Answer the clangor of the brazen bell
Hung in Excitement's tower of alarm,
And wildly rush into the sudden strife.
In front of some, uprising instantly,

Stands the black wall of Opposition's front;
But welding all the heart's diverse intents,
At Anger's flashing forge, into one point
Of penetrating fire, they hurl themselves
Fiercely upon it; others, unopposed,
Do make but frenzied and convulsive leaps
Out of the streams of life, into the wild
Dark airs above, as if to find and clutch
The shadowy hand the hissing Anarch shakes
Above their heads. And all of them, at most,
But gain a joy that strikes them with the pulse
Of tiger leaps, and tears the aching heart
More than it pleases it.

O fatal fact,
That there be men like these! whose poisoned blood
With deadly forces charged, has never flowed
Under the spirit's glowing arc of light,
But still through cataract and whirlpool falls
Down to the rocky deeps of soulless life,
To wash the roots of old volcanoes there!

But there are others of these fighting hosts
Who are not mere involuntary foes;
But who can train the whirling airs of wrath
To the straight winds of purpose: can maintain
The fickle fires of passion's changefulness,
On the cold altars of deliberate thought:
Whose eyes are hooded not with Hate's red mists,

Although their slow hands work his ministries.
These have but written love upon the sword
To give it keener edge. God! how they strike!
What care they how the heart-blood drips,
When far before them shines the limpid stream
Which flows around the perfect world of peace,
Where they can plunge the stained blade and leave
It clear forever? Pause not, then, nor spare!
Let the sword cleave! hold with firm hand the
lance!

Yea! level it upon the cross of Christ,
If there be need, so that it find the heart
The readier! But mark, ye conquerors,
The blade that vanquishes, also divides!
No other sovereign hath so mean a realm
As Victory: 'tis but the little space
Where the foe stood, and which, lying prone,
The senseless body mutely claims of death.

Behind the murderous men of blood and blows,
The mighty swarm of mimic Fighters comes.
Their tossing hands are weaponless or bear
But implements of peaceful industries,
Brandished as swords or couched as lances now.
These are the toilers turned antagonists:
They strike not at the bodies, which they reverence,
But clash their curious accoutrements
Destructively together; or attack

Some rare possession each one cherishes;—
Such as the masterpieces of their toils,
Or elfin lamps of all their beauteous crafts,
Flashing a mystic difference of flame.

They have not learned to honor more than flesh,
The silent, shrouded power which moves the frame,
Divines and shapes the pictured plan, and pours
The moulding impulse through the finger-tips.

What do they here? The God of Battles calls
Not such to share his warlike ecstasies!

Nay now, another God, He of creation's day,
Hath with the chrysm of His fruitfulness
Touched, long ago, their souls. How have they
erred!

Had they no wax to fend the fickle ear
Some morning when the keen-edged call of War
Clove the fine web of peace upon the air?
Yet earlier than that fatal time, methinks
Something they worked on took the sportive shape
Of accident, and echoed an old wrong,
Heart-whispered, back into the mind as wrath;
Or, in an idle reverie, they have seen
Peace but distort her face and thought her War.

Immortal spirit, Human Fellowship!
What place is alien to thy noiseless feet?
Through all this dusk of tumult thou dost run,
A silver phantom severing the night.

In the close columns of the victors now,
Again among the scattered vanquished seen :
Driven before the fury of attack,
Yet smiling scathless in its rear, beyond
The touch of every brutal instrument.
I see thee as thou fling'st thy subtle net
Around some heart unleashed of violence,
Or dropp'st new life upon some crime-killed spot.
I see thee steadyng the gleaming blade
Of Order in some rude, unconscious hand,
And drink the vintage of the flashing vine
That grows upon the blow: with thankful tears
I see some maimed and bleeding victims find
New ways of life; and give thee all the praise.

THE COMPANY OF OPPRESSORS.

Whence comes oppression? who hath summoned it,
To bring abasement to the ranks of men?
Hath any man who walked, by happy chance,
Near to those secret passes of the earth
Where yet divine words pierce her hebetude,
Heard any god that said to her: "Obey;
Be dumb and false; contaminate free life
With servitude; cheat men of liberty?"
Hath there been one so recreant among
The natural powers that federate with men,
As to betray to fear his true ally?
Have anywhere earth's vocal waters dropped,
Either in terror of the cataract,
Or in the artless moments of the shoal,
A word save that of freedom? Have the winds
Which burn themselves in freedom's living flame
Upon the manly face, spoken, in stealth,
A lesser word? Doth not the hurricane,
Although it hurls men harshly to the ground,
Jar from their hearts and quickly sweep away
All dust and rubbish of slow-gathered fears?
Yea! hath the loudest Alpine avalanche
Which bounded past an Alpine freeman's door,

E'er, with its heavy thunders, plunged so far,
It found a hollow pit of cowardice,
Heart-shaped, to echo in.

Nay! never there,
Nor anywhere in nature, did arise
This monstrous thing. Ye who would find its cause,
Must search the guilty records of Mankind;
For Man alone has power to hate a man!
And the sole tyrant of the earth now is,
And has been in all ages, only Man!
Haply, could one retrace the mingling streams
Of error and of crime unto their springs,
It might appear, that, in the world's first age,
Some mighty soul convulsed by his own strength,
Hath shaken with such elemental throes
That the time-beds of corporal hardnesses,
O'er which the heart-streams ran, sank suddenly,
Letting their golden floods, which ne'er had known
Sting of resistance, violently strike
Against the under rocks of others' lives;
And seeking newer channels, undermine,
In blindness only, all their dearest joys.
Let me believe in such an accident!

But where, O first Oppressor! hast thou learned
To mimic the bright floors of fellowship,
With pavements black of cold conspiracies?
Where, thou fierce centre of dispersive force,

Didst learn to gather men for conference?
How hast thou found that hidden point in the hand,
Where brothered souls may touch, screened by the
 clasp,
And galled the spot so that they shrank apart?
Who showed unto thine evil eyes the heart's
Fine balances, that thou mightst stealthily
Load them with lying enmities? and how,
Having by contact of contagion spread
This despot's malady amongst sound men,
And gathered them around thee in a band,
To give coöperate impulse to thy thought;—
How hadst thou even then the power to bind
The iron sheaf of selfish agencies,
With the mist-girdle bright of unity?

Come now unto the desecrated spot,
Where gather for their dark, despiteful deeds,
This struggling and disordered company!
Hear how their speech is as the hawk's wild scream,
And maledictions are their sole salutes;
See how their coward breasts are fortified
With stolen shields, which careless confidence
Fashions and throws away indifferently;
Behold the leashes wound around their wrists,
Which are attached unto disfranchised souls,
Caught stooping over pleading suffering,
Or in some snare adroitly laid for them;

And note the scourges of spun flame their right
Hands hold and drive down to the quivering spirit.
Lo! from the cloudy banners which they bear,
Storms, ripening hourly, fall on their heads,
While from the midst of them, rapacious winds
Flowing to every quarter of the sky,
Are taught returning curves, till they bring back
The sacred drift upturn from peaceful lives.

Take heed! O Infancy: for they have set
Their guards close to the gates of life! Full soon
They seize the unsuspecting child, beyond
The limits of his free, inviolate
Meridians; and through low, covered ways
Of habit, drive him till he learns to stoop!
Full soon they break the silver sheath of the heart,
That the dry winds of new desires shall blow
Through its fresh chambers blightingly, and leave
A never-ending want! Therewith they set
Him by the side of fading flowers and say:
“ How worthless is the beauty of the world; ”
Take him unto the desert home of drought,
And say: “ Thirst is the world’s eternal law; ”
Lead him beside the track of falling stars,
And in the swiftly-fading light, proclaim:
“ There is no day; ” show him the riven rock,
The shattered tree, to demonstrate how poor
A thing is strength; and linger with him where

Their servile bands drink ever the thin broth
Of meekness, and explain the qualities
Of goodness which submission hath.

And thus
The growing captive, step by step, is lured,
By these false symbols to the very brink
Of those dark chasms in the clear expanse
Of human life, wherein Fear's spectral brood
Or Frenzy's frightful crew shall urge the poor,
Despairing one to that last fatal deed—
The irretrievable apostasy of soul—
Annihilation of the living self;
And he becomes at last a finished slave.

But should he be unvanquished? should his soul
Refuse to die as long as Freedom lived?—
Then would the quick blows fall upon him, till
The loud lash hushed the world's fine harmonies.
Oh! who may strike aright?—yea, though a god?
Could anyone e'en as the lightnings strike,
The blow but rushing in a stream of light
Which fails not till it falls, he still would do
An evil, hateful deed; man's truest blow
May spring from some illumined perch, but flies
Through night and darkness to an unseen end,
Blind unto all within the unknown space,
To righteous protests and to pleading signs
Coming from all the unseen populace;—

It is a mad, black meteor that wrongs
The skies of night! Strike not! strike not at all!
How thinks one that his blow be not 'gainst Life?

What, O Oppressors, do ye gain of worth?—
A little ground, whereon to set and prop
The standard of a lie! a little time,
To hear the falsehood echoed from blank walls!
By turning of all luminous things away,
Ye make a darkness where your glimmering souls
May flicker out and think the last gleam glory.
Would the bright dawn seem brighter unto you,
If ye had power to place all other men
With faces towards the west? or would, in sooth,
Your own souls higher rise if theirs could see
Only the sun and stars forever fall.
Through the forsaken skies, and, thus betrayed,
Copied the downward motion, and so sank
To servile deeds? Nay! what's already done
Has closed all avenues of true delights!
The breezes of strange worlds would blow on you
Through those hearts only, and ye closed them up!
The light of perfect suns would glance on you,
Striking the argent glory of free brows,
But ye have set shame there to baffle it!
Ye have destroyed each minted excellence
Of other lives, e'er you could contemplate
Your own small piece contentedly,

Seeing how Want, albeit far away,
With her long graver, hastened to inscribe
New figures on it. Yet never hath there been
Such blind and profligate extravagance.
Ye who were owners of the jewel mines,
The pearl seas, frostless fields and sunny springs
Of Freedom's world, have rashly spent them all
For arid sands and pools of stagnant waters.
Each one of those ye bind, did ye but loose
His bands, might build for you sweet ways of swift
And jeweled wonder to immortal homes;
But ye perversely choose to follow still
A wild beast's path unto a howling den.

O ye Oppressors! harriers of men!
Slayers of honor! summoners of shame!
Trippers of trusting hearts! guardians
Of fractures, flaws and all imperfection!—
Disband your ravening ranks! haste! disappear!
Relieve the rigors in the hearts of gods!
The laborings in space for emptiness!
Let earth be ever black where ye have met,
And the strange air with dark suggestion mixed!
Let each be gone to some black cavity
His biting deeds have dug in distant worlds,
And there shall Solitude, for centuries,
Ripen for him o'er all her endless plains,
The changeless stems of selfish memories,

Beneath a dead sky set with one pale star
That moves not from its desolate repose.
And afterward, shall come, at intervals
Of many waiting years, distracted choirs,
That fearfully and far away, do make
The circuit of the dreaded place, and chant,
In interblending scorn and piteousness,
“Behold the misery of waiting! weep!
Oh weep, and moan, and bruise thy faithless hands,
And with thy ceaseless tears wash thou away
The poisoned juices of thine evil days!
Thou art as one of us: thou too shalt wait,
Even as those who see no end to pain!”

THE COMPANY OF LOVERS.

Not under shallow skies whose steely floors
Let the thin stream of day pass icily;
But happily, beneath warm depths of blue,
Where dawns and sunsets linger and unite,
The land of Lovers lies in bounteousness.
No stringency oppresses its pure airs;
No clouds appear save the bright subtle wreaths,
Like exhalations of the lands excessive sweets,
Floating aloft but fragrant, shadowy hints
Of cryptic sanctities. The flowing streams
Need not the storm's replenishment, since springs
Unfailing feed them; and no drouth e'er wastes.
No violence hath ever pared away
The mountains' plenitude, but Music's tides
Have gently channeled out their yielding sides,
In hollows fairer than Calypso's cave,
Where purest echoes form continually.
All things have rounded to some acmed grace
Which passes not; the flowers are as when
They first bloomed out: each living thing abides
In the glad motions of its purest impulse;
The heart of man triumphantly has leaped,
Like the exultant salmon, up the last

Steep waterfall of counteracting beat,
And now serenely finishes the course
Unto the fountain of another's love.

But off beyond the boundaries of the land,
Deep in the dusk of distance, faintly seen,
Still lurk the spectral shapes of evil powers
Banished by early lovers long ago;—
A fierce brood holding in their hands
The formless masses they had hung on man,
To burden him: the fetters they had fixed
Upon his hands; the black shrouds they had
wrapped,
In mockery, around the heart which slept
But was not dead; and viler still, the nets
Of logic and of falsehood for the mind;—
O gaunt and angry group, ye wait in vain!
Ne'er shall ye hear from one apostate tongue
The word that calls you back into this realm.

He that hath pure eyes, he whose pure lips
Can give the kiss that covets not, nor chills,
Whose hand keeps not a torpor in its touch,
Let him behold this company of Lovers.
First, in the outer fields, as though they just
Had crossed the low environs of the place,
The young man and the maiden walk alone,
The fine surprise of new-discovered grace

Still visible: she scarce remembering
How yesterday he looked; and he, in turn,
But questioning in secret, if until
The morrow her new beauty should endure.
What seraph energies were hid in each,
That such faint call could bring divinity?

O hour of dawning love, what sights are thine!
The revelation of unlimited
And hidden, unsuspected treasures;
The swift annihilation of the locks,
And banishment of false custodians,
Economy and Prudence and Reserve;
The alien garb of poverty torn off
The living spirit where it hath no right;
And they mistaught in arts of beggary,
Become at once the open, fearless givers!

Strict are the balances which keep
The level of the human and divine in life!
A little breeze that blows across the soul,
Heavy with sweetness of another's life;
Nay, but the flushes from the crimson deeps
Of other souls, mixed in its airs, and sense,
Outweighed, is tossed like chaff into the void.

Second are those who have been trained to love
In families. No barriers of birth

Aliened their favored hearts; the names they bear;
Father and Mother, Brother, Sister, Child,
First formed of earth, inventions are of Love.
And ever hath Love's unseen multitude
Pressed round them making musical acclaim,
Until upon the spacious shield of Home,
They have been lifted to this kingly state.

And many who have found this blessed place,
Meeting, by chance, afar in loveless lands,
From strangers grew to comrades, then at last,
Under association's steady sun,
Like white mist from the currents of the blood,
Saw Love arise.

Less numerous are they
Who have been summoned by some conquering
sign,—

A touch of an unseen archangel's sword,
Or sight of some celestial vine that crept
Over the high close wall of thought, and showed
One glorious blossom to the startled soul.

How manifold the ways of this bright land!
And strange the labors of the loving race.

Some teach the winds to gather all the sweets
That float in wild dispersion through the air,
And bear them round and round the happy land,
In circling courses of communal joy.

Some hasten the morning from the hills of dawn
And make the light through sieves of gladness fall;
Hold back the day with twilight sorceries,
And winnow darkness of the seeds of sleep.

Some watch the days expand their fragrant blooms,
And smooth the wrinkled petals of the hours;
Sweep back night's rising waves of secret pain,
And purge the heart of all its ripple-marks.

Others the scattered fagots of the mind
Form to a ring of truth-surrounding fire;
That Falsehood cannot pass into the soul,
Nor old Opinion at her smoky loom,
Weave fabric that can curtain off the light.

From Hippocrene flowed not so clear a stream,
As from the meads of their humanity,
The lovers' dancing feet can strike to life;
And they can sit them down and watch
The flowing of the limpid tide, wherein
The North Wind may not cast her frosty fear,
Can bind its broken song and charm the heart
Forever 'gainst the old trance of the world.

But there are others who in braver ways
Fulfill the deed of love in this fair land.
See the Knight-errant Lover as he flies,

Spontaneous as dawn, and clad as stars
That lead the golden ages o'er the brink
Of epochs wrinkled in the want of love!
Ne'er comes he to the side of one in need,
But slinks away some dark antagonist
Of perfect life—but breaks some ligature
About the central self, as 'gainst it swells
The mighty surges of commingled wills.
Onward he hastens seeking every hour
A new Belovèd, and upon the sheet
Of some white enterprise of daring, writes
New lines of hope for sight to twine upon.

And there is one who keeps the unity
Of love, the Hero Lover, guardian
And giant warder of the sacred stores.
He nothing suffers to be snatched away;
And lets no stream be lost in the dim groves
Of fragrant revery, but safely leads
It to the open world again, with all
Its spicy airs and mystic murmurings;
He drives a golden wedge beneath the day
And brings it level with eternity;
And as his great heart feels the deathless beat
That comes upon the pulse of common life,
On some vast stage of well-accomplished fact,
In view of all the lover company,
He builds a new and wondrous scheme of love,

Wherein gleams clear, in fair equivalence,
The special curve of every single will.

Yet fails the long procession of their joys
To match the august circle of the year;
And one short blank of sadness reappears,
With every turning of the magic zone.
Then gather slowly on the farthest verge
Of their broad realm, the grieving populace,
Their beauty darkened as the breath of Want
Bites deep the bloom of Plenty's ripening;
And turning to the deeps beyond, where swarm
The hordes of the unloving, to the gulfs
Where demons hover scoffing, and where brood
All storms, all desolations and all wraths;
They sing in solemn unison their prayer;—
Love, love, O all ye hosts of bitterness!
Ye awful relics of abandoned worlds!
Ye ghosts that haunt the newer house of life!
Ye poisoners of stars, and torturers
Of all the flowing life between! love! love!
Ye who have made the scattered flock of years
Grow weary seeking their eternal fold;
Ye who have saddened seraphs by the sight
Of souls forever springing to the heavens,
And sinking feebly to some humble perch;
Love! love! O give and gather love!
How long will ye resist our prayers? how long

Before your sunken hearts shall hear the winds
Of love that sweep o'er all the plains of life?
Behold, the agony of eyes that watch!
The longing for the beauties yet unborn!
The train of excellences that await
The fecund hour of brother-clasping hands!
Behold, the haunting wastes of parched desire
Which might be tenanted! O love! love! love!"

THE COMPANY OF WORSHIPERS.

O Thou, the spirit's God, unbodied might!
Thou who surroundest every human soul
As with a flowing light which carries it
Along the unseen courses of Thy thought;
Let me, who am a soul o'er sentient,
Take such impression from Thy boundless touch,
That all the rigid barriers closing me
Shall drop away, and let Thy consciousness
Flow with its free infinites through mine,
Leaving the drift of wisdom glistening
Upon the whitened beaches of the mind.

O Thou in whom this little arc of life
Is rounded to the circle's fulness; Thou
Who frontest nature with majestic peace,
Meeting its fury with Thy waiting thought
And slow omnipotence; how do its storms
And raving floods, recoiling from some flash
Of radiance that seemed the face of Thee,
Continuously turn back upon themselves!
While ever silently Thou castest wreaths
Of tempering beauty round its spheric fires.

Hearest Thou not the tread of many feet,
And many voices calling earnestly ?
O God of multitudes, art Thou not glad
To see such numbers coming unto Thee ?
See how they hasten to the heights of Time,
And turning mutely from the clouded airs
And shadowy paths of earth's commotions, gaze
With patient eyes on Thy eternities !
Be Thou not angry that they seek Thee not,
With eyes that change, amidst the things of change ;
For they have looked for Thee through all the
world
Of visible things, and found there naught to match
The everliving thought that prompted them—
The changeless principle within their hearts,
That lay unbaffled amidst turbulence.
They could not find Thee in the fleeting shapes
Dazzling or darkening through the maze of nature ;
Nor could they wait until the swift and sweet
Pulsations of material things should die
And leave Thine image fixed in lifelessness.
The earth could not deceive them—be not wroth—
The broadest joy of time was narrower
Than every heart's least measurement :
The sweetest melodies that flush the air,
The brightest flowers that burst from dark
restraint,
And all the subtile kindred of delight,

Swimming with rapture in the streams of day,
Seemed but a glittering drift from Thy fair land—
But scattered petals of thy perfectness.
Yea! earth itself between its flaming wheels
Of dawn's and sunset's crimson radiance,
Was but a chariot to ride to Thee.

Not by some narrow path that shaded winds
About through groves of gloomy reveries,
Or, through the wilds of sunnier isolation,
Coils the fine threads of mystic fragrances
Back to some hidden blooms of secret joy ;
But in broad ways of open conference,
Fit for the soul's parade and for the marshalling
Of all its allies of the infinite,
The Worshipers advance, with even step,
And reverent, solemn gesture, towards the dim
And boundless plains of God. Most eminent
The subtile beauty of this company :
All are arrayed as for some ritual
Of nature, where combine the elements
In simplest ways to strongest purposes.
The light upon their faces was not shed
From fires invited by the spark of change ;
But yet they glow as if an angel's wings,
In passing o'er them, stealthily had brushed
Some earth stain from immortal substances,
And left them ever ready for the gaze

Of stern and constant-eyed Omnipotence.
Into the depths of their pure eyes has ne'er
Been cast the anchor of the earth's desires,
Nor ever hath a sail been sighted there,
But bore the hope of God. There is no void
Before such faultless sight; beyond the sun's
strength

Reaches that longing gaze, but reaches not
The God they reverence. They see Him not;
Yet ever runs before them, phantom-like,
Some form the heart fore-forges, neither God
Nor image sure of God, but gleaming link
Between those two divine invisibles,
God and the human soul.

What pliancy

The infinite doth show before their hands
Upraised, with forceful fingers drawing it
To lines of awful beauty! Forming there,
Are highways softly-white and sentient,
Converging to a boundless blessedness—
Some central unimagined unity,
Vaulted with visions of the Perfect One;
And over them advance with rhythmic step,
A happy pageant of the radiant dead;
Pausing at alabaster temples, pure, ineffable
Wherein Truth's Priestess, from the chancelled
glooms,

Lifts her white hand in guiding constancy;
And entering, at blessed intervals,
Inns of ecstatic waiting, for a space.

Not always do these Worshipers direct
Their eyes unto such visions; oftentimes
They turn them towards each other with kind looks
Of heaven-tutored love. Long since they learned
The first, fine ways of perfect fellowship;
It may have been that clasping as in prayer
The same white column of some sacred fane,
Their hands were interlocked by gracious chance;
Or that, in later hours, each had beheld
Upon the other in a flash of light,
Some subtle touch of the divine, and knew
The Perfect Hand had made them ever brethren.
But now, in mingled consciousness, they feel
The inner pulse of life that beats in all
Corporeal things—the rock as well as man—
And enters every human heart through deep
And secret passages, and bears to all
The one high Will, whereon the whole world rocks
As but a little shallop on the sea.

Imperishable are the ties that hold
Divorceless this sublimest company!
For they are made not merely to survive
The tumults of the days, but to endure

The passage of the burning, breathless voids
Which Death hath made around this narrow life.
Most beautiful the pledges that they give
Of their fidelity;—sweet stainless things
Which they can show unto the Faultless One,
Or rare white-rooted immortalities,
Plucked from the fields of earthly righteousness.

Lo! now it is the blessed hour of prayer:
Bend down your heads in reverence,
All ye who stand beside the way, whose souls
Still freshen in the vital airs of faith!
And ye, O jeering rabble following,
Who drag the dreadful bell that tolls
The death of all the gods; abase your eyes!
For now the Worshipers, with solemn mien,
Approach the altar God hath set for them.
What rarest gems and costliest properties
They offer there! All that the earth doth hold
Which seemeth dear unto the earth's dim sight;
All things of beauty strung not on the thread
Of goodness; all the wingèd ecstasies
Which cannot fly above the bounds of change;
And every sweet of day which day can take
Back to the dusky underworld again.

Now when the fires are kindled and the pile
Burns, smokeless, with its strange and awesome
lights,

One leader of the holy ministries
Sings the first hymn of invocation thus:

O Thou who art deathless and birthless,
Behold now the flame we have made!
How it burns all the dying and worthless,
Brought forth in the sun and the shade!

O Thou who art viewless and soundless,
Behold now the flame we have lit!
Shines there not, in Thy heavens so boundless,
Some light that is like unto it?

Then following, after a reverent pause,
With bolder note and choral unity,
The mighty company renew their prayer.

The soul Thou hast set by the side of Death,
Behold how yet it remaineth white!
How it shows not the touch of the dying breath,
Nor the dark effect of the damps of night.

The soul Thou hast set by the side of Sleep,
Behold how it never hath known a bed!
How the stalks of its longing higher creep,
And their petaled glories are farther spread.

The soul Thou hast set by the side of Grief,
Behold how still it appeareth glad!
How it sayeth that sorrow is but the brief
And deceitful dress in which joy is clad.

The soul Thou hast set by the side of Hate,
Behold how it never hath learned to wound!
How it loveth early and loveth late,
And closeth all in its sacred round.

The soul Thou hast set in the tempest's track,
Behold how it stayeth all untorn!
How the storm but giveth and taketh back,
But the soul remaineth still unshorn.

Untie for us now the girdle of Time;
Let the perfect life be one with this!
Let the joys that may never reach their prime,
Be folded up in eternal bliss!

O leave us not in life's inland sea!
To be tossed about in its shallow surge;
Let the waters rise till they float us free,
Over its morning or evening verge!

THE COMPANY OF THE AGED.

On the last verge of Time the white walls gleam
Which gird the stormless City of Old Age:
Far from the sun it stands; so far, indeed,
His white, swift arrows of the noon appear
As blended with the rounder, heavier shafts
Of morn's and evening's tinted dalliance,
And reach with futile touch but to the feet
Of its wide bastions: mathless, every roof
And tower and dustless street lies bleaching ever
Beneath the soft world-light which flows disorbed
Throughout the all-embracing Infinite.

The place seems populous and yet unfilled:
From every side save one, the awfulest,
By countless ways of different purposes,
The Almost Aged near the silent walls,
In half unconscious, unintentioned throngs,
Who pass in pensiveness the dreaded line,
And start, in fear, to find themselves within
This hundred-gated Thebes of destiny.

Cautiously, confused, with vague expectancy
Mixed with misgivings nameless, terrible,
They look upon each other; and the gloom

About the mind, with sudden rigor seized,
Shoots forth the sad white bolt of certainty;
And wonderingly, with slow and painful speech,
They say unto each other: "We are old;
For us have Nature's colored lights gone out,
And left but one pale night-lamp where she sleeps:
For us is ready earth's viaticum:
Lo! her white passport shines upon our heads,
And we must cross the sunken boundary
Of that one country where are all the dead."

And now in silent reverie they walk
Along the strange, calm streets, with thoughts
that still
Do linger with the past already turned
Unto a riddle, now, for aye unguessed.
Over and over doth the mind repeat
The solemn query of the anxious heart:—
"Where, where, along the highways of the world,
Stood the Life-Angel with his open book?—
Oh where, amid its wild-wood mysteries,
Lurked the one bright but undiscovered place,
Wherein its dark thought bloomed to revelation?"

But as they slowly pass adown the streets,
Seeing no object present to the eye,
And noting nothing of their new abode,
Still peering through Abstractions's endless ways;

A strange new sense of things impersonal,
Of common, indivisible intents,
Drifts like the fragrance of an unseen flower,
Over the lonely seats of separation,
And wins the alien minds still lingering there,
Back to the one sweet thought—a common lot.
Again humanity's long-scattered rays
Converge in silent power to one pure flame,
And *Man* shines like a pharos among men.

There is no difference in empty hands;
Nor rivalry of honors 'mongst full hearts.
Now do they see how Nature strings for all
Her glittering gifts upon the same weak thread
Which breaks against the last sharp edge of time;
How all the different domains of life
Slope finally unto the same white beach,
Whereon the Unknown rolls its noiseless waves.

With purer eyes and hearts accepting all,
They come, at length, unto an open space
Where lies a great white shaft upon the ground.
This is the column of historic names,
The glorious record of illustrious deeds,
By some bright miracle of righteous hand,
Brought to the level of a just old age.
No name stands higher than another's here:
Truth builds no pedestals for accident;

Nor lets the chisel of unthinking praise
Make a false record on thy perfect stones,
O fair and friendly City of the Old!

Near the prone column is a wider way—
Which leads unto a neighboring spacious square,
Called, by the Old, the Field of Memory.
Those newly come, in glad surprisē, behold
Its grassy levels greening as in spring,
With flowers that glitter in their dewy wealth;
And hear, amazed, its ever murmurous airs,
Where myriad bees, with slender traces draw
Invisible wains of sweetness all the day.
Unfailing freshness overspreads the place,
Since in the centre of its loveliness,
Rises a fountain from some secret deeps,
Throbbing its gentle fullness o'er the brim,
Twin with the one which waters childhood's meads.
Here do the city's happiest populace
Meet in the mornings stretching unto eve;
Fill the long benches as in school-boy days;
Or sit apart, and through the quiet hours,
Count the light waves of rippling revery.

But now for all is ended, evermore,
The isolation of the personal
And strenuous enterprise; and multitudes
Of those blithe intimates of early youth—

The free familiars of impulsive days,
Who gather at those crossways of the soul
Where the dark paths of earth's austerities
Are parted by the bright celestial trail;
Return unhidden from their banishment,
And meet with joy their favorites again.
And with them come those of more common hours,
The clamorous comrades of their early games
And sports that daily wore out weariness,
And take again, with some familiar word
Or sign, their places on the old playground.

And silently and with strange sweetness come
And join the band, all of the early lost,
Whose streams of life ran too much in the sun,
And so were to the empyrean won by it;
Or they, the little ones of tender arts,
Who, timidly, an early refuge sought
'Neath the white shield of Peace: and proudly come
Those whose young hearts had been, alas! too bold;
Who hurried wildly to strange battle fields,
Where Nature had not set her standard up,
And were subdued and into darkness led.
Nor shuns this bright reunion of the heart,
Those, who, too eager, sought the ends of life;—
Children of aspiration and desire,
Who wandered up some secret slope of time,
And came upon the level of old age,
Unthinking, in the middle of their days.

Sometimes, in hours of higher vision, cross
This never-vacant Field of Memory,
The mighty spirits of the Inner Life,
Who tarry in the shadows of the world,
Yet rule it to the limits of its light.
E'en as they seemed when first they touched the
soul,
So now they look unto the older sight.

Power, the mighty wrestler, passes first,
With rounded arms weighed down with many thongs
Ready to bind the ministers of fate.
Then Knowledge, with the dust of many lands
Upon his somber robes, offers with pride
His map of pilgrimages. After him,
Fame, the unsteady, with her humming wings,
Promises to set an everlasting flame
Above the envious winds of changefulness.

After an interval, enters, with careful step,
Art, like the very heart of solitude,
Her patient head inclined above her task
Wrought in slow movements of the infinite.
She heedeth no one, save in piteousness,
To give one warning gesture and farewell.

Truth, the proud alien, with exalted looks,
Follows as one who knoweth not her goal,

Yet sees the far hills of a fairer land.
Labor, the slow and easy-paced is next,
The strong triumphant ruler of long days,
Who winds the double gladness of the dawn
And evening round her homely sheaf. To all
She offers room in her wide, even ranks
Forever marching to new victories.

Now Justice the inscrutable appears,
Mysterious roundsman of the sinuous way,
Which, vine-like, runs along the boundary
Of earthly life, on this side and on that,
And joins two worlds in one beneficence.

And, last of all, Love, in her changing dress,
The beauteous guardian of the world's delights,
Who wastes her treasures in a single hour,
And hoards the pence of Duty through the years.

There is another place in this strange town,
Near by the fatal breach in its high walls
Which Death made long ago, and none may close,
Where those that sorrow for the recent dead,
And feel their loss grow to a doubt of life,
Meet for assuagement of their maladies.
And from the midst of them I hear a voice,
Sounding like Hope's or gentle Prophecy's,

Which says, “Grieve not, O friends, grieve not,
nor doubt;
All life is one and indivisible:
Our birth and death but thin partition walls
Which hold us separate for a little while.
The dead were only made a part of light,
And so, invisible:—were lifted up
To bright, aerial ways, and still march with us.
Here where the vivid, throbbing hues of life
Have wrought their last white mystery, think not
That naught goes on beneath that sacred veil.
Shall Nature daily work her miracles
Before our sight, and then seclude herself
To do a trivial thing? Nay! She but stoops
Below the dim horizon of this life,
To show to myriads on the other side,
More glorious arts than earth e'er witnesses.
The low, dark cloud that hems our present sight,
Discharges lightnings it hath gathered here,
Across the skies of close Futurity.
This narrow stream of life, which swiftly flows
From birth to death, is not the master current;—
Is but a branch which makes a slender loop
Around the blooming, sun-loved isle of Time:
Only one crimson-tinted sail pursues
The winding channel; but the great white fleet
Of our infinities moves grandly on,
And waits us at the misty anchorage.

Look at these hands, how weak and shrunk
they are!

They can no longer pilot the wild car
Of Nature's keen and buoyant energies;
Nor stay, for long, the feeblest swan that draws
Her golden-canopied delights; but yet
The *life*, the *life*, runs mighty in the heart!
It knows no lessening; but widening
Unto the measure of true fellowship,
Reaches at last its perfect plenitude!

Look ye upon the past! what do ye see?—
A dusty road across a barren land;
Or rocky heights o'er which a wild vine hangs
Some bitter berries for the storm chased birds?
However once, not thus it seems to-day,
But is a scene of high magnificence;
A star-dust gleam envelopes everything:
A bloom and beauty linger, chronicling
The passage of the everlasting life.

And now, sweet friends, look ye upon the future!
What stands it on? Unveil your eyes and look!
See ye the soft white floors that lie below
The growing burden of its mighty fates?
They reach unto these walls! yea! at this hour
Ye stand on them! They are the measureless,

The everlasting firmament of life!
O fellowship! O mighty art of God!
O might and mystery of Unity!
The universe doth stand alone on thee!"

THE CHORUS SINGER.

No tremor of the o'erstrained chord of self
Breaks on her heart: no fitful gambler's flush
Upon the face, tells of desire's red flame
That lights a private stake beyond the gush
Of moving sound, where crouches Praise or Blame.

She is a nameless voice that fills the ear,
Unseen and unsolicitous of view;
Song's mystic measure hid in overflow;
A crystal door which wild sprites clamor through,
Or august phantoms pass sedate and slow.

She is the bearer of some excellence
Which broadens past the single heart's extent;
And, in a vision, vast, impersonal,
She sees sweet forces subtly interblent,
And feels a joy that hath no interval.

Music doth win her from her lowly place,
And leaves her image only on the stage;
Through aspiration's channels she recedes,
Upborne by gentle winds that never rage,
Melodious as if blown through pastoral reeds.

On distant shores she sees ecstatic bands
Weaving the mesh of some great symphony;
Yet higher, comes where song no more is speech,
But a heart-impulse spreading silently,
Which misses nothing that it strives to reach.

Currents of vast communion carry her
Beyond the outmost of the stellar isles,
And still that clear accordancy extends,
Past any measurement of numbered miles,
Into the glooms infinity o'erbends.

She has become free child of life, and moves
From being into being as she wills:
Now is the lily of inspired rest;
Now in the wakeful crystal newly thrills;
Or is a little bird upon its nest.

She is a leaf, a flame, a radiance,
A color, scent, or natural element;
She lies a lizard sprawling in the slime;
Or as a sacred ibis is content
To touch but waters undefiled by time.

She feels the strenuous sweep of striving powers:
Within her doth some great volition swell:
Afar in flashing circles she is whirled,

In meteor bands round orbs incomparable;
Or flies an atom conscious of a world.

The chorus ends: that secret energy
Which is the soul of union slowly wanes:
The singer wakens from her happy dream;
She sees no more the world where Music reigns,
But the packed hall where all as strangers seem.

INTIMACIES.

On all that Nature holds to view,
The print of earlier life survives:
A fragment of the oldest world,
Would tell the tale of older lives.

How dear this thought of ceaseless life,
In broader being held as one!—
How dear the dream, that something keeps
Whatever men have felt or done.

Each gate of pleasure that I reach
Has heard the same wild bugle-call,
Blown by a host we cannot trace
And waits a host invisible.

Each barrier that limits joy,
Has felt the blows of hearts at bay,
Since men first trod its closing paths
And stood unshivered as to-day.

The faintest fragrance drifting near,
Seems like a wingèd sentiency,

Thick with the meanings of old days,—
An essence of eternity.

Perhaps this moment, as I muse,
Flits past, elate, the very air
That loosed a song from Sappho's lips,
Or tangled Cleopatra's hair.

THE SENTENCE.

Once, Justice, seated on her tarnished throne,
Grew weary of the ceaseless plaint and moan
Of those she reckoned as her very own:—

Grew weary of the dooms so oft decreed,
Weary of lifeless words which none would heed,
And vain assaults against the deathless Deed.

Starting, she let her scales fall, with a thud,
And fiercely cried, “Blood will not balance blood!
Nor cataracts of death stop murder’s flood!

Bring me the man who last his brother slew!”
She ordered, while her inner passion grew,
“That he may hear the judgment that is due;”

And waiting, stood so motionless and straight,
That o'er her heart the powers of highest fate
Might then have balanced heavenly weight with
weight.

The culprit came, as one already dead,
With lifeless face, and slowly-dying tread;
But in her presence woke to some new dread.

“I doom thee not to die,” his judge began,
“I doom thee to the fear of every man,
And to a flight thy thought can never span:—

Go forth! mine iron guards shall set thee free!
But know that all thy foes go forth with thee,
With hands that ever unrestrained shall be!

The Law hath shielded thee for years two score;
Now shield thyself if men beset thee sore!
Thy name upon her tablets stands no more!”

INSANE.

I.

A Hercules had raised him from the ground,
With futile strength, to crush him in the air;
Seeing that every fiber was too sound
For Titan energies to bruise or tear:
Diana's gentle shafts had turned aside,
To make his robust sleep more wierdly fair;
And Death his name in Heaven had not cried
For many years; yet he is worse than slain,
There with that poisoned arrow in the brain.

II.

He who all tumults of the mind restrained,
In Frenzy's charge afar hath now been led;
And in some gloomy chamber is detained,
With writhing serpents twined about his head,
And wingèd creatures, in disordered flocks,
Sowing the darkness with unmeaning dread;
Vague thunder evermore his prison rocks;
And restless shadows hover round those eyes,
Wherein the flame of courage slowly dies.

III.

Truth, he is thine! defend his helplessness!
Often thy mighty hammer he did bear,

And struck to earth the engines of distress;
Nor any monster of the thought would spare:
Lo! Falsehood now into his presence comes,
And leads wild bands of dancers round his chair,
Timed by the jingling tabor which she drums;
And taunting him they come about his knees,
Raving in lies and incoherencies.

IV.

The past across his darkened memory lies
But as a moted beam of baleful light,—
A tinted shaft of seething atomies,
Which sheweth nothing unto him aright;
And all the troublous swarm of fitful gleams
Vibrates along some inner chord of spite:
The faces he has loved are shattered dreams,
That whirl around him in fantastic glee,
Part of the awful unreality.

V.

This *was* my friend! (Oh! *what* is he to-day?)
Not long ago it seems we were so near,
Each unto each, discovery's single ray
Would pierce both minds to one triumphant cheer;
One flower of gladness sweeten both our lives;
And had we walked along doubt's sickly mere,
What time death's equinox across it drives,

One wave that broke beside our luckless feet,
Had drenched two souls in misery complete.

VI.

Together we have started, with a shout,
And up the steeps of difficulty dashed;
To carry from behind the last redoubt,
Some prize that boldly to the future flashed
Defiances; and down the easy slopes
Of leisure loitered, unabashed,
E'en to the hollow where Inertia mopes;
Or on enthusiasm's smoothest levels,
Our feet have mingled in the fairy revels.

VII.

Rough earth hath still its secret, magic places,
Which early life rubs smooth with rapid touch;
So that on them immortal powers and graces
Are mirrored for the eyes that look for such.
Upon a place like this our love first fell;
And looking there, it did not seem too much
For us to hold, that time could never quell
That pulsing blessedness which in us flowed,
And on the hours its happy presage strowed.

VIII.

The world seemed spacious only to contain
The growing bulk of our companionship:

The clouds would mix it with their drifting rain,
And with our little river it would slip,
Far as the waters have the art to run:
The winds would hold it with a gladsome grip,
And round our broad-browed mountains it would
 twine
The lingering beauty of its massive vine.

IX.

Unfettered power seemed placed within our hands,
So swift the impulse of the kindled mind
Flows down the happy vales of Vision's lands;
And knowledge, a delight still unconfined,
Faced the fond eyes whichever way they turned,
With vistas where the fruitful life declined,
Slow to the blissful mists the sunset burned:
No hindrance anywhere; nor any pause;
Continuous hopes; and deeds that had no flaws.

X.

Now hath our vision flitted as a breeze,
And left unbared the rocky hills of fate;
Into a place of ghastly mockeries,
One hath been tossed as by a gust of hate,
Where Lassitude lies coiled about his heart;
The other still assumes the victor's gait;
Builds a new dream where newer splendors start;

And walks down highways of sublime intent,
With shackled hands and form too early bent.

XI.

O goddess! keeping that uncertain door
Which on some central pivot freely swings,
And opens now upon the earth's far roar,
And now upon the world of silent things;
Who life and death impartially canst boast—
The child that babbling to the Future springs,
Or sage and incommunicative ghost—
Wert thou not wounded at this woeful sight—
Life closed in life—day drowned in sickly light?

XII.

O ye from out whose souls of orbèd flame
The rays of fate shine down the human ways!
How could ye suffer him to come to shame,
Whom ye had cradled in such perfect days?
Have ye not yet his knightly prowess missed,
When every helpless virtue kneels and prays
For succor of that strong archangel wrist?
See he is gone! Falters the great design!
Let still the human forward the divine!

XIII.

And ye, mankind's old lords of history!
Heroes who on the earth once worked your will,

And then withdrew to that vast mystery
Which only vague, elusive splendors thrill!
Are ye not shaken with an inward rage,
To see your mighty projects standing still,
And madness ending your high lineage?
Or do ye idly through the heavens rove,
Regardless of the world where once ye strove?

XIV.

Great spirits yet unborn, who touch with fire
The crags ye stand on, waiting for your hour!
Send ye not far ahead your pure desire?
Or hold not o'er your future home some power?
Could ye not reach with aid our honored one?
Then tremble on your lofty peaks and cower,
And back into your formless darkness run!
Or take your greatness to some other sphere,
For Wrong, the mindless terror, still is here!

XV.

Bright bands that fly distributing through space
Supernal loveliness, the while ye trail
O'er men such wreathing glories as embrace
The hills of earth as day begins to fail!
Was there a head more fair than his to take
The subtile tendrils? stronger in the gale
Which follows swiftly in your bēauty's wake?

Was there another eye so quick to see
The mystic meaning of your unity?

XVI.

Angel that ridest on the flowing air,
With loosely trailing draperies of light,
And arms that for tremendous deeds are bare!
Whom men called Freedom once, and now name
Right!

What mind thou visitest in thy vast round,
Shows as did his such buttressed walls of might?—
So many burly phantoms thrown and bound
And lying helpless at the outer gate?
Or for a briefer moment made thee wait?

XVII.

He knew men must be free; and ever held
That they were noble by the power of choice;
He saw the Will in every breast incelled,
That rose with tightening sinews at his voice,
And came and wrestled with the human bars;
And were one shattered, long would he rejoice;
Would tell it to the sun and to the stars;
And taking from its place a sacred roll,
Would trim his pencil to record a soul.

XVIII.

What crashing temple of exalted hope
But calls him to the rescue of its shrine?
What arm so strong to lift the fallen cope,
And fling away the columns that confine
The buried glories? Who so well can bear
That dazzling booty farther up the slope,
Once more the trembling, doubting heart to dare?
O Hope! O Hope! thyself be sad this day!
Thou canst not reach him with thy longest ray!

XIX.

Who fed so well the little rim of flame
Which marks mankind's advance across the waste?
Or won the dull face of forsaken aim
Back to the charm which may again be chased?
Who gave so often to the vulgar true,
The crisp, keen lights that with the morning raced,
And spicy flavors of the luscious new?
His life was like eternity laid bare:—
A burnished pleasance flowing in the air.

XX.

Beauty and Love, genii of saving sorceries!
Twin guardians of society's true pole!
Who practice round its shaded sanctities
The sunny arts which humankind control;

The thin lights of your circling, magic line
Could never his majestic heart cajole;
But through them to the dusk of the divine,
He went as one who would by naught be stayed:
Inquiringly, awe-led, yet undismayed.

XXI.

Wert thou not cheated, Life--robbed and left bare?
Thou canst exchange with Death, nor suffer loss;
For that dumb giant of the vacant stare
Doth give the heart bereaved a higher gloss,
And one more wandering gleam for eventide;
But what can Madness ever send across
The shaking bridge o'er which her furies ride?
O Life! O Life! didst thou to this consent?
Then shalt thou through the centuries repent.

XXII.

O healing powers, that aid creative throes!
Ye subtle agents coursing in the veins,
Who cure so many of our common woes!
All wonder-workers baffling human banes,
And spirits of supreme beneficence!
Mingle your mights 'gainst our beloved's pains!
And harry mania's fleering phantom's hence!
Heal the worst sore that now in nature lies:—
This wound upon our immortalities!

SIRIUS.

Was there not ruthless breach of equity,
When such clear fires were given to thy care,
O brightest star? Or did thy peers agree
To take a lesser splendor for their share?
The doubt grows as a film before my sight;
Mine eyes fail, but thy light which never fails,
Like white scorn through the unresisting air
Upon my guilty eyeballs seems to smite,
And all the foes of vision there assails.

Hast thou a memory of an earlier day
Of dimmer fires, when thou, perforce, didst grope,
With fierce confusion on thy starry way?
And couldst thou then look up the matchless
slope
Where moved Aldebaran and Betelguese,
And, nothing envious, gloried in their light,
Wherewith, unlustered still, thou couldst not cope,
Save by that force which works the heart's decrees,
The flameless passion of thine inner might?

However this, since first men's eyes beheld
The heavens glowing with unearthly fires,

That sprang unkindled, from those deeps upwelled,
Where vision ever mingles with desires;
Thou hast been chief of stars:—unchanged thy rays
That stretch above the troubles of the world
Their slender, pure and subtly-silent wires,
Waiting, unsounded, through the clamorous days,
For that true song in Time's last vortex curled.

O thou of perfect light! O seer star!
Thine eyes seem set unto a single glance:
Grow they not weary with that scene so far?—
Turns not the vision to a lifeless trance?
Our eyes grow duller in the little space
They look at thee, and soon will close in sleep;
Shall not the blessed sometimes look askance
From their high joys? Doth never fade the grace
That wasteful mortals but a moment keep?

Not yet! not yet for me the perfect life!
Rather the longing and the earthly pain!
Rather the fierce resolve—the noisy strife,
Followed by music of the broken chain!
Listen, O Sirius, to the echoing stone
That last bold leap of mine, from ledge to ledge,
Set rolling towards the long-forsaken plain!
No star hath ever heard a sweeter tone,
Crossing the heavens from flaming edge to edge.

LYNCHED.

Lift not your eyes, Americans!
A citizen was murdered here!
This form last night was yet a man's!
This man was yesterday your peer!

Look not upon that swollen face,
Which life can nevermore make fair!
Still showing but the wild gimace
Of agony that fronts despair.

With fearsome steps avoid this ground!
Infection lingers, coil on coil;
The frenzied throes of hearts unsound
Have shed their poisons on the soil.

Rage has stood here and laughed at Rule;
And smote the Right with fiery fist;
While Folly, grinning on his stool,
Kept with Dishonor shameless tryst.

And Tyranny, in breathless chase,
Came close upon the scene to gloat,
With triumph flaming to her face,
And fingers feinting at her throat.

What precious fabrics here were torn,
Which long in nature's looms did grope!—
Truth's baldric o'er man's bosom worn,
And pennant of his purest hope.

The sacred sail that bears the just
Across contention's burning seas,
Lies shredded in the trodden dust,
To swell no more with freedom's breeze.

The charm our fathers bore away
From lands of brutal force and hate—
Where, ever, all unprized, it lay—
To make it centre of a state;

Was that crown-gem of human worth—
The loadstone of converging minds,
Which here was thrown again to earth;
And changed for fear that vainly binds.

Fall, honored shaft and monument,
And proud upgrowths of patriot art!
Since level with all base intents
Lies manhood's pillar in the heart.

Come forward now Democracy,
Clad in thy saddest mourning gown!

Haste, if thy tears will let thee see,
And cut this swinging body down!

Come! for the wrathful winds of day
Make it a ghastly pendulum,
That drives along Time's darkened way
The spectre of some awful doom!

AT THE DOOR.

Who stands at my door to-day?
Is it Toil with the tactless hand,
Or Rest in her alien land?—
Custom who steadily cries,
Hoarsely, her monotonies;
Or Change, who will not confess
Her only guide is a guess?
Is it power that weakness hides,
Or Fraud with her granite sides?—
Success with a puzzled eye,
Or Failure still ready to try?
Is it Jest ing that once was Joy,
Or Doubt who comes to destroy?—
Be it any of these—away!
I will go not out to-day.

I will stay in my room to-day,
And to-morrow too, perhaps:
Yea! ever, until there raps
The musical hand of old,
That called ere earth was acold;
When Life, as a naked child,
Led me with carolings wild,
Afar in her ways of fire,

Where Truth was under desire,—
Possession ever aflame,
Since never darkened by blame.
When *Life* shall summon once more,
How soon will I open the door!

THE FORMLESS THREE.

O Heat! O Light! O Wind!

Thanks be to Heaven, she gave to you no form!

That all diffused must be your subtle charm!—

The potent presence for our senses thinned,

O Heat! O Light! O Wind!

O Heat! O Light! O Wind!

If you appeared, and 'twere in woman's shape;

How could one beauty-loving man escape,

From western prairies to the hills of Ind,

O Heat, O Light, O Wind?

O Heat! O Light! O Wind!

How everywhere, with broad advance you go!

If you had arms how strong would be your blow!

And none might live save he who had not sinned,

O Heat! O Light! O Wind!

MIRACLE, ROMANCE AND SONG.

Miracle, Romance and Song,
Unto these our fates belong.

One but moves the hero-mark
Higher up Ygdrasil's bark:
Ever reads in "Stop Thou here,"
"Come thou on another year;"
Knows that *finite* is a word
Human heart should ne'er have heard:
In the dust of hapless deeds,
Seeth that new power breeds:
Finds in life but one decree,
That a man a *man* shall be:
Everywhere doth meet the sign
That the world is all divine;
And in nature only knows
What within his being flows.

Such the first: the second is
But enlightener of this:
Truly measures every fact,
By its grace attests the act:
Shows the greatest deed of earth
Hath not half a wronged heart's girth:

That the glory highest hymned
Nothing is where eyes are dimmed;
Gathers all that men have done
Since the world's work was begun,
And then dooms the splendid pile,
If it cost a single smile:
Sees that all things come to naught
If not love alone is sought:
Shows the world above our own,
And thereon its fairest zone:—
All and greater doth Romance,
She whose sceptre is a glance.

Now comes Song to bind the two,
And revealeth all they do;
Making all the world to share
In the beauty of this pair:
Perching on the deeds of might,
Soaring in romantic light,
Ever making them agree;
Song is greatest of the three.

Miracle, Romance and Song,
Unto these our fates belong.

IN THE REAR.

Who shall remain in the rear?

Who shall be last?

Is it he that delayeth through fear—

Is aghast

At the shouts of the foes at the front,

Or whose eye is too dull for the hunt;

While, the strength of his hand being past,
He but plays with a spear that is blunt?

Nay! but hands strong, heart brave, and eyes clear,
Should he have who remains in the rear!

Fierce are the foes in the rear

(Far from the van),

Where the moan and the curse and the sneer

Still cling unto man;

And the chieftain who glorious leads,

Knoweth not of the lusterless deeds

Which are wrought in that life under ban,
Where the palm from the victor recedes,
And where Tumult is lord of the year,
Till he yields to the man in the rear.

Pale terrors fly close in the rear—

Strike from behind:

Vague visions of baubles once dear
 Haunt the new mind;
While the hero who battles before
Needs a hero to smother the roar
 Of the wings of the past, and to find
Newest cheer for the heart that is sore;
And if ever the goal shall be near,
Let him bless the strong man in the rear.

What joy for the man in the rear,
 Watching the rest!
Unto none may such visions appear—
 Not to the blest—
As to him whose glad eyes shall behold
All humanity's glory unrolled,
 And the splendid array gain the crest
Of the last sloping mountain of gold!
As he follows with pride, what a cheer
Shall there come from the man in the rear!

AD INFINITUM.

There are no limits to the lines
Of living things that all ways run;
The part we measure but unites
The coming and the past in one.

All life is like a magic square,
Whose mystic columns e'er agree:
Add up each one, if so you may,
The sum will be eternity.

Life comes, and yet no more is here;
Life goes, but still no life removes;
The gleaming cars are always full
That glide along life's golden grooves.

How old is man? why, just as old
As is that little child at play:
Both *have been always*, that is plain,
Or neither *could exist to-day*.

All lives are self-existent wholes,
Diverse, immortal, sentient:
What we call birth is but the plunge
In nature's single element.

Only *to be*, let this suffice,
For us who claim infinity;
Till one shall come with skill to prove
We *were not* and we *will not be*.

A COLD DAY.

Down through summer's gulfs of heat,
Where breezy blessings flow and meet,
And ripple many a liquid sweet:

There drifts,
And sifts
A something finer and colder,
A something sharper and older,
That falls till the flame-founts smoulder.

Loose-woven is the garb of June,
Coarse-meshed is every airy boon,
And low the blazing bar of noon,

When drifts,
And sifts
The something keener and clearer,
The something that touches us nearer
Than light or than music that's dearer.

Like mists from faces of the dead,
Like breath from ghosts' lips sadly shed,
Or dust from highways that they tread,
It drifts,
And sifts

O'er heights of odorous treasure,
Through streams of limpidest pleasure,
From voids the chilled thought cannot measure.

THE RINGS OF SATURN.

I saw as in a dream
Saturn imperial;
And, by the vision's beam,
Its double coronal
Widened, brightened, and grew
Into a meaning integral
The watchful spirit knew;—

Highways of polished gold
Circling a stainless star,
And round those circuits rolled—
Each in his shining car—
Legions of seraph chevaliers,
Who held outstretched afar
Their slender alabaster spears.

Ever those armies kept
Their faithful, guardian flight;
No evil e'er o'erleapt
Their nimble shafts of light;
And ceaselessly their might did bar
All floating soil or blight
Which drifted towards that stainless star.

THE CAPITOL DOME.

What castle in the air—what dreamland shrine
Has here come true? Who has but now compelled
This floating alabaster from the common mine,
Where, heavy-loaded, it has been incelled,
And put it back into its element,
Secure where his high aspiration swelled?
What subtle mysteries are yonder blent!—
The fragile beauty of a dream's device,
Showing the lines of Dante's Paradise!

O filmy fabrication of delight!
Thou spectacle of blithesome changefulness:
Rapt night-work of some saintly vapor-sprite,
Which the chill morning holds in his caress;—
Or, as I look again, transformed in all,
Thou seem'st an august vase which one may guess
Has lately been dislodged from Heaven's wall,
But in its fall was stayed by some deep law,
And hangs there still, unstained, without a flaw.

AN OLD FRIEND.

When did we really meet?
Was it but when the shower
O'ertook us in the street?
Or earlier, by an hour
So very true and sweet,
It melted in the soul,
With all its tender light,
And Memory could not write
One line upon her scroll?

Whene'er we met, the place
Was where a temple is,
Which keeps inshrinéd in grace,
The heart's antiquities;
And shows, on holy days,
Also its prophecies.
And meeting even there,
One subtle moment told
All years can tell the old,
Or saints can wring from prayer.
And who shall now pretend
Thou art not my *old friend*?

LOVE'S WORLD.

As the fragrance round the flower,
Or abundance round the shower;
As the glory round the moon,
Or the bliss around the tune;
As the vision round the fact,
And the blessing round the act,
The World of Love surrounds
Our common earth's hard bounds.

A WINTER NIGHT.

Intense pre-occupation of the sky,
Faced by the earth's impenetrable sleep!
Standing alone, upon a hillock steep,
I am as one between, whom both deny.
Chill seem those starry fires; they are too high,
For any warmth down to this heart to creep;
And earth's concentrate passion lies too deep,
To be unloosened by a human cry.

Strange, mystic anger swells into the heart:
Some older rock of knowledge seems its source;
And pains of long-numbed thought within me dart:
Vaguely I feel as part of that old force
That set the heavens at their silent toils,
And lays the earth in slumber's icy coils.

THE THINKER.

The thinker's seat is in a barren place,
Where, shunned by those whom hoarded wealth
elates,
He counsels with the Genius of Estates;
And looking thence, his head he doth abase,
To see Endeavor reaching but disgrace;
The nimble snatching what another waits;
Satiety that hunger imitates;
And Plenty mourning for her puny race.

But whispers him the spirit at his side:
"Here lies the circuit of my true demesne:
On these rocks only are my titles seen;
Since Wealth is but the thought which shall abide.
Though yonder may my footprints deeper sink,
Yet men shall only *find* me when they think."

II.

The thinker's walk is through the common ways,
Where, midst the accidents he may not shun,
He seeks the living thread on which they run.
To help some awkward hand he often stays,
Yet puts aside, at last, the offered praise;

And touches not a gift from ignorance won,
Though some may deem it honor's paragon,
And know not of his inner, fadeless bays.

If men mistreat him, looking for the cause,
He sees each deed, by whomsoever wrought,
Springs partly from another's earlier thought,
And thus resentment loses in the pause;
Till Anger, frowning, after her defeat,
Is seen to smile before she can retreat.

TO A LADY

WHO FIRST STUDIED PAINTING AT SIXTY.

All fragrance was not given to the flower,
Or else some flowers may hide their subtle mist,
For tender ministrations, when they list,
To fill the moments of that withered hour
Wherein the plant shall fall; not like a shower
Descendeth Heaven's best gratuities,
But drop by drop, behind slow auguries;
Nor doth she give to strength her highest power,
For hands that soon the hand of Death must press,
May often hold a charm which turneth light
What weighs a Hercules: so, e'er the night,
Though life inclose thee in a hard duress,
Thou mayst behold through rings of piled years,
As from a well, some daylight stars, with tears.

THE EVENING HOUR.

As after eloquence there comes a hush—
A silent sealing in the heart's pure cells,
Of that extracted sweetness which outwells
When genius may some fine emotion crush;
So after the long day's exalted gush
Of strenuous hymns and easy canticles,
Some benediction in the evening dwells,
That holds earth mute until the after-flush.

No sound! no movement! save one pallid cloud
That slowly leaves the now bereavèd west;
A robin hurrying home from some far quest;
And high in air, to ceaseless labor vowed,
Some swallows, those amphibia of flight,
That wait the darkness on the shores of light.

THE COMMON MAN.*

Behold! he ever does the world's wide will,
Makes what is good, and masters what is ill;
Lives not oblivious of earth's blessed ways,
Nor clogs his progress with disordered days.

His strength is as the braces of the sky,
While as the salt sea's breath his bravery;
And well he knows his own worth's true intents,
Although he counts not its constituents.

His arms are round with deeds as yet unwrought:
His shoulders mighty and abased by naught;
For they can bear, nor press upon the heart,
What cowards cast there with eluding art.

Justice and mercy do in him concur;
His truth is as the day's diameter;
And Peace doth lead, by day, his hasteless feet,
And tarries long beside his evening seat.

What man has ever done he doeth now—
Be it to forge, to build, to sow or plow—

*Reprinted, with corrections, from the author's previous volume,
"An Idyl Of The Sun, And Other Poems."

And round the forefront of his last act shine
The cumulate beauties of the long design.

Not in the new alone doth beauty sleep,
For olden things a higher import keep;
That stream is purest which doth longest flow,
And what is best will aye the farthest go.

The common man is slow, sees not afar;
Must keep his eyes where'er his full hands are;
Enjoys the common hues of near-by things;
Stops at the blue of mystic quiverings.

His goals are near, and one the sun each day
Drops warm with life and not too far away;
But ere the night he grasps the bauble sweet,
And its sun-warmth is blent with his heart's heat.

Yet not the slave of despot Day is he,
But the free servant of the Century;
And though his mistress veils from him her face,
He sometimes feels her hand's imperial grace.

He sees the measure of his lasting might
In every work his hand concludes aright;
And each result his widening spirit frees;—
The houses he has built hold but his families.

His lips have simple songs, while Music's art
Doth only still the groves about his heart;
That when her chosen chantress sings, at last,
No rival songs shall 'gainst that strain be cast.

Not from rare moments' tenuous chalices,
Flame-filled and flashing with infinities,
But from a cumbrous bowl of common clay
Drinks he the lasting joys of his long day.

No fairies light upon his steps attend,
But giant, heavy-handed forms, that bend
And pour for him thick liquids, amber-clear,
Slow drip of sweets long stored from some dream
year.

Yet there is set within his heavy frame
A secret truth which hath on earth no name;
And though his lips shall speak wise things and true,
His words have one side dark and give no clew.

He is the keeper of all permanencies;
On his acceptance wait discoveries;—
Though one should force a gift from Heaven's
height,
The common man alone can keep it bright.

He has long leisure, yet he wastes no time;
He waxes old, but still enjoys his prime;
And what another in despair has sought,
He finds, at last, without one troublous thought.

Behold! he ever does the world's wide will;
Makes what is good, and masters what is ill;
And when the race has reached its earthly span,
The *common* shall appear the *perfect* man.

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